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ABSTRACT

A study of eligibility for freshman admission among California high school graduates was conducted by contacting all schools offering high school diploma programs. The schools were given instructions on selecting a random sample of graduates' transcripts from each graduating class. The 1,180 responding schools submitted 15,973 transcripts, or 6.9% of the 1985-86 graduating class. Following a discussion of the definition of eligibility (eligibility on the basis of grade point average was used, with the successful completion of college entrance examinations also required in some cases), major findings are reported in the following areas: (1) overall estimate compared to Master Plan guidelines (14.1% were eligible for admission, compared to the estimate of 12.5%); (2) large differences in eligibility that persist among ethnic groups; and (3) differences in eligibility between urban and rural areas. Charts display differences by sex, ethnic group and urban versus rural areas. Differential eligibility rates by ethnicity and by region are discussed as statewide issues, while overall estimates and resulting enrollment pressures are discussed as university policy issues. (KM)

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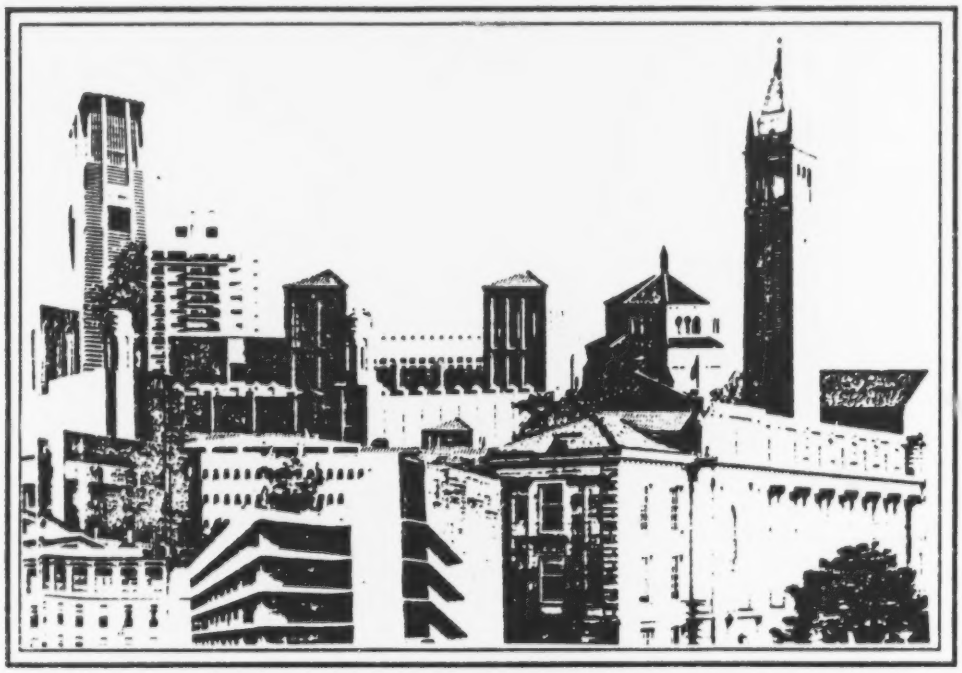
ELIGIBILITY FOR FRESHMAN ADMISSION TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

A Statement to the Regents of the University on the Commission's 1986 Eligibility Study

by William H. Pickens, Executive Director



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Summary

In this statement to the Regents of the University of California, William H. Pickens, the Commission's executive director, describes the findings of the Commission's 1986 eligibility study as they apply to freshman admissions at the University.

Mr. Pickens explains the reasons for the 1986 eligibility study, its procedures, and its definitions; and he relates the findings of the study to several policy issues facing the State and the University, including differential rates of eligibility among ethnic groups and by geographic region, enrollment pressures on the physical capacity of the University, and the use by the University of credible and fair supplemental admission criteria besides high school grades and standardized test scores.

Mr. Pickens notes that for several decades the University has exceeded its Master Plan eligibility guidelines of 12½ percent and that its estimated eligibility rate of 14.1 percent for 1986 "means that some adjustment in the University's admission criteria should be made to reduce the proportion of high school graduates eligible for the University, in order to conform with existing policy" (p. 5).

After presenting this statement to the Regents on February 18, Mr. Pickens discussed it with the Commission at its meeting on March 21, 1988. Additional copies of the statement may be obtained without charge from the Commission's Library by calling (916) 322-8031 or writing the Library at the California Postsecondary Education Commission, Third Floor, 1020 Twelfth Street, Sacramento, California 95814-3985.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FRESHMAN ADMISSION TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

A Statement to the Regents of the University on the Commission's 1986 Eligibility Study by William H. Pickens, Executive Director of the Commission, February 18, 1988

CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION
Third Floor • 1020 Twelfth Street • Sacramento, California 95814-3985

COMMISSION REPORT 88-11
PUBLISHED MARCH 1988

THIS is one in a series of staff reports on important issues affecting California postsecondary education. These reports are brought to the California Postsecondary Education Commission for discussion rather than for action, and they represent the interpretation of the staff rather than the formal position of the Commission as expressed in its adopted resolutions and reports containing policy recommendations.

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Eligibility for Freshman Admission to the University of California

MR. Chairman and Regents, I appreciate this invitation to describe the results of the Commission's most recent study of high school eligibility for the University within the context of your general discussion of admissions to the University. I will briefly describe the purpose and background of our study of eligibility before turning to our most important findings and their implications for State and University policy.

Reasons for the eligibility study

As you know, the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education recommended guidelines on the appropriate size of the pool of high school graduates from which the University of California should select its first-time freshmen -- that guideline being the upper one-eighth, or the top 12½ percent, of the public high school graduating class while the guideline for the State University was the top one-third. The Master Plan indicated that the Regents, as the governing board for the University, should establish the means of identifying the top one-eighth in a manner that would ensure the highest possibility for scholastic success of the students accepted for admission. Of course, if high school grades alone were the measure, it would be relatively simple to determine the top one-eighth, but over the years, the University has used a system of course requirements, grade-point averages, and test scores in order to determine a student's eligibility -- and these have been changed periodically.

Because of these changes and the complexity of the process, it is important to measure periodically the actual congruence between the size of the eligibility pool identified by current admission criteria and the Master Plan guidelines. The Legislature and Governor have asked the Commission, which is responsible for monitoring the major elements in the Master Plan, to conduct three statewide analyses of eligibility for the University of California and the California State University -- in 1976, 1983, and 1986.

First, let me describe the process by which we study eligibility.

The eligibility study process

In October 1986, the Commission contacted every California public regular and continuation high school, public adult school, and California Community College offering a public high school diploma program. The Commission and the State Department of Education sent a letter to high school principals providing instructions on how to select a random sample of graduates' transcripts from each school's graduating class. Contacts with the schools yielded usable responses that included 94.4 percent of the 1985-86 graduating class. The 1,180 responding schools submitted 15,973 student transcripts, or 6.9 percent of the graduating class, which had been systematically selected to assure an unbiased sample.

Commission staff then sent copies of these transcripts to University and State University admission evaluators who reviewed each student's course work completed, scholastic achievement, and entrance examination scores in order to determine eligibility.

From start to finish, this process takes roughly 18 months, and the Commission received a draft report of the findings two weeks ago.

The definition of eligibility and a caveat

The complexity of the issues surrounding current admission criteria and the Master Plan guideline for eligibility is illustrated by the difficulty of even ar-

riving at a definition of the term *eligibility* itself. The most strict definition of an *eligible* student is one who has all of the academic qualifications required for admission to the University of California. However, we have all agreed that the operational definition of *eligibility* for these periodic studies should also include those students who have all the appropriate courses and grades but who have not taken all of the required college entrance examinations when those examinations are not used by the University to determine the student's eligibility status. For example, students with grade point averages of 3.3 or above are eligible for admission regardless of their score on the SAT or ACT tests. Therefore, students who have not taken these tests are considered part of the "eligible" pool of graduates even though they would not be officially admitted to the University until they had gone through the formality of taking the tests. Therefore, our estimates of the University's eligibility pool include two categories: those eligible and fully admissible, and those eligible but not fully admissible without taking a test -- as indicated in Display 1.

Another issue to bear in mind as we review the findings of the study is that these results are based on a random sample of transcripts selected from California's public high schools. Obviously, our sample of 6.9 percent of all transcripts yields less precise results than an eligibility rate computed on the basis of an examination of the transcripts from all students. Therefore, in the following discussion, *significant differences* refers to those differences that exist among the estimated rates even when sampling error is taken into consideration.

Major findings

1. *Overall estimate compared to Master Plan's guidelines for the University*

As you can see from Display 1, 14.1 percent of California's 1986 public high school graduates were eligible for admission to the University under its regular admission criteria in effect during Fall 1986. This estimate is significantly above the Master Plan's guideline for the University of 12.5 percent.

2. *Differences between men and women*

A significant difference exists in the University's eligibility rates of men and women. Women are more likely to be eligible for the University than are men, but this difference is primarily attributable to the higher grades earned by women in their college preparatory courses. When one examines those who have successfully completed all the requirements for admission -- those who are both eligible and admissible by having taken the required tests, the differential between men and women is not significant. While women have the courses and grades necessary to qualify for admission, they are less likely than men to actually take the college entrance examinations required by the University.

3. *Differences among ethnic groups*

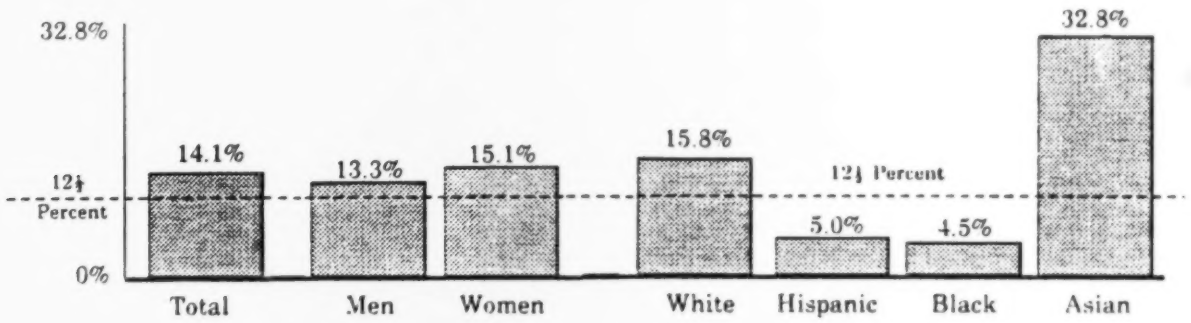
Display 1 also indicates the large differences among the eligibility rates of members of the major ethnic groups first noted in 1983 persists in the 1986 study. Asian graduates are twice as likely to achieve eligibility for admission to the University as are white graduates, while white graduates are three times more likely than Hispanic and Black graduates to achieve eligibility. To be more specific, 15.8 percent of the white graduates were eligible; 5.0 percent of the Hispanic graduates; 4.5 percent of the Black graduates; and 32.8 percent of the Asian graduates.

It is important to note also that while the relative differences among eligibility rates of graduates of different ethnic backgrounds in 1983 continue in 1986, some shifts have occurred. The eligibility rate of Asian graduates increased by 6.6 percentage points since 1983 -- a statistically and substantially significant change. The eligibility rate of Black graduates increased by 0.9 of a percentage point -- a 25 percent increase that, while not statistically significant, suggests a substantive improvement in Black graduates' eligibility for the University -- although the rate is still depressingly low. Relatively no change occurred in the eligibility rates of white and Hispanic graduates between 1983 and 1986.

Differences in eligibility rates of men and women within these ethnic groups also exist. The higher eligibility of women appears within all groups except among Hispanic graduates, where men have

DISPLAY 1 *Percent of California's 1986 Public High School Graduates Categorized as Eligible or Ineligible for Admission to the University, by Sex and Major Ethnic Group*

Category	Total	Sex		Ethnicity			
		Men	Women	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian
Eligible with all requirements	8.4%	8.2%	8.7%	9.3%	2.9%	2.1%	22.7%
Eligible but missing tests	5.7	5.1	6.4	6.5	2.1	2.4	10.1
Eligibility Pool	**14.1**	**13.3**	**15.1**	**15.8**	**5.0**	**4.5**	**32.8**
Eligibility indeterminate	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.9
Ineligible by deficiencies within "a-f" pattern	9.4	8.1	10.6	9.7	7.1	4.5	17.3
Otherwise ineligible	76.2	78.2	74.0	74.2	87.7	90.6	49.0
Sample Size	15,572	7,572	7,998	9,119	3,334	1,437	1,149
Precision Level	±0.54%	±0.78%	±0.80%	±0.74%	±0.72%	±1.12%	±2.58%



Source: Adapted from Display 12 of *Eligibility of California's 1986 High School Graduates for Admission to Its Public Universities: A Report of the 1986 High School Eligibility Study*. Draft Report, Commission Agenda Item 16, February 8, 1988, p. 22.

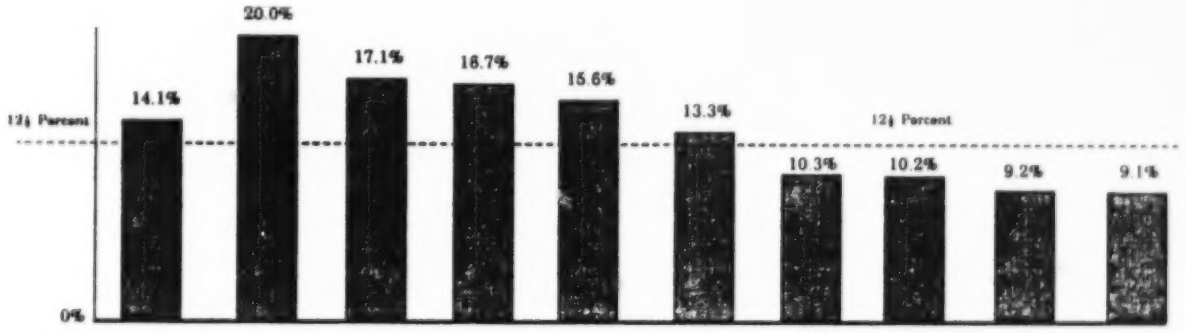
higher eligibility rates than Hispanic women. In addition to being less likely to take the required college entrance examinations, Hispanic women are less likely than Hispanic men to enroll in the college preparatory curriculum and earn the necessary grades to qualify for the University. However, differences in eligibility rates are influenced much more heavily by a student's ethnic group than by their gender.

4. *Regional differences in eligibility rates*

Display 2 indicates the eligibility rates of 1986 graduates in eight major urban areas and a single estimate for the remaining rural counties. As you can see, significant differences in eligibility rates exist according to where students live. High school graduates in the San Francisco Bay area and Orange County are significantly more likely than stu-

DISPLAY 2 *Overall Eligibility Rates to the University of California for Eight Major Urban Areas and All Other Counties*

	State	San Francisco Bay Area	Orange County	San Diego County	Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties	Los Angeles County	Sacramento, Placer, and Yolo Counties	All Other Counties	Riverside and San Bernardino Counties	Fresno, Kern, Kings, and Tulare Counties
Eligibility Pool	**14.1%**	**20.0%**	**17.1%**	**16.7%**	**15.6%**	**13.3%**	**10.3%**	**10.2%**	**9.2%**	**9.1%**
Precision Level	±0.54	±1.47	±2.00	±2.06	±2.86	±0.96	±2.22	±1.29	±1.71	±1.80



Source: Adapted from Display 9 of *Eligibility of California's 1986 High School Graduates for Admission to Its Public Universities: A Report of the 1986 High School Eligibility Study*. Draft Report, Commission Agenda Item 16, February 8, 1988, p. 17.

dents in other areas to be eligible for the University, while graduates in the Sacramento/Placer/Yolo county region, the Riverside/San Bernardino county region, the Fresno/Kern/King/Tulare county region, and all other rural counties are significantly less likely to qualify for admission than students in other areas.

Statewide policy issues

I would now like to discuss some implications and policy issues raised by these findings. The first two are issues where the challenges can only be solved through cooperative efforts by the State and the broad spectrum of educational institutions in California, including the University.

1. *Differential eligibility rates by ethnicity*

Eligibility represents one important measure of opportunity for a baccalaureate degree, and the continuing low rates of eligibility among Blacks and Hispanics means that educational equity must remain high on the State's agenda -- especially with regard to courses taken, adequate preparation, and academic success in high school. Although there is some evidence of progress here, the challenge requires a much broader and concerted effort by many institutions, including the University, to make college preparation a priority in schools where it is not currently.

At the State level, the California Education Round Table and its newly created Intersegmental Coordinating Council, should consider new approaches to this problem. In recognition of the need to address this problem from a broad perspective, the Postsecondary Education Commission's Special Committee on Educational Equity has scheduled four "dialogues" around the State with community groups, business leaders, and others outside the educational institutions, as part of our effort to develop a new agenda for evaluating the effectiveness of educa-

tional institutions in promoting diversity in student bodies and among the faculties.

The eligibility differences between men and women pose a different challenge. The data from the study suggests that social conventions or expectations may influence women not to choose the university even when they are eligible to do so by grades and courses. The implications of this for vocational choices and for many professions, especially the faculty, are important and deserve attention in high school counseling and outreach programs.

1. *Differential eligibility by region*

Wide regional differences in student eligibility have not changed between 1983 and 1986 in that students in rural areas are much less likely to be eligible for the University than their counterparts elsewhere. Again, this is a statewide issue of equity for students and means that we must identify the causes (lack of courses available, inadequate counseling, or less contact from California's universities) and deal with them through cooperative efforts. This is an area where leadership by the State Department of Education is important if equity for students is to be achieved.

University policy issues

Let me turn now to some other areas where the University and the Regents should be the primary actors.

1. *Overall eligibility estimates compared to the Master Plan guideline*

For several decades, estimated eligibility rates for the University have exceeded its Master Plan guideline of 12½ percent, which the Regents have adopted as policy and the Master Plan Commission recently endorsed. The 1983 eligibility study's estimate was 13.2 percent, which was close enough to the guideline not to be statistically significant. The 1986 estimate of 14.1 percent is significantly above the guideline and means that some adjustment in the University's admission criteria should be made to reduce the proportion of high school graduates eligible for the University, in order to conform with existing policy.

2. *Enrollment pressures on the physical capacity of the University*

During the 1980s, an increasing proportion of students who were University eligible have decided to enroll in the University. In 1980, 6.0 percent of recent high school graduates enrolled, compared to 7.9 percent in 1986. Looked at another way, 40 percent of all University eligible students enrolled in 1983, while 44.6 percent chose to do so in 1986. Even if the eligibility pool is reduced slightly by some adjustment, this trend means that student demand for spaces will not decrease. Furthermore, if the number of transfer students also increases -- and preliminary data for the fall of 1987 indicates substantially larger numbers are transferring from the Community Colleges -- the University's current facilities will be sorely strained to accommodate all eligible students who which to enroll.

Unless the University intends to meet this challenge by denying admission to eligible students and reverse a long-standing practice, long-range planning on where these students will study is essential -- and, of course, the State should be a party to these plans. Especially necessary at this point is for the University to be clear campus by campus, as well as systemwide, abou... capital outlay costs of enrollment increases during the next decade and about alternatives.

Concluding observations

Finally, let me make an observation about eligibility, admission practices, and success at the University. Our analysis of eligibility focuses on the first step of an important process by analyzing the standard admission criteria of grades earned in the college preparatory curriculum and test scores received. These criteria define the pool of eligible graduates for freshman admission to the University -- an opportunity that is sought increasingly by students. As a result, many campuses of the University receive applications from a larger number of eligible graduates than can be accommodated by that campus, thus resulting in supplemental admission

requirements beyond those necessary for eligibility to the system as a whole.

We believe that a broader basis for evaluating the potential for academic success beyond grades and test scores is a positive change, so long as those criteria can be clear and applied fairly.

Policy makers need to know how the eligibility rankings of students relate to their later performance in the University. What other factors beyond eligibility criteria significantly influence the success of students? Do the supplemental admissions criteria relate directly to grades in the University or to graduation rates? Answers to these and other questions about the relationship between access to, and success within, the University will help ensure that the selection process is credible and fair, a process whose results and relationship to scholastic success should be constantly evaluated.

Again, let me thank you for this opportunity to discuss the findings and implications of our eligibility study in such a forum. The issues concerning admission to the University are among the most difficult in higher education, and this meeting is an important step in better understanding the issues and promoting discussions to improve the process.

CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

THE California Postsecondary Education Commission is a citizen board established in 1974 by the Legislature and Governor to coordinate the efforts of California's colleges and universities and to provide independent, non-partisan policy analysis and recommendations to the Governor and Legislature.

Members of the Commission

The Commission consists of 15 members. Nine represent the general public, with three each appointed for six-year terms by the Governor, the Senate Rules Committee, and the Speaker of the Assembly. The other six represent the major segments of postsecondary education in California.

As of January 1988, the Commissioners representing the general public are:

Mim Andelson, Los Angeles
C. Thomas Dean, Long Beach, *Chairperson*
Henry Der, San Francisco
Seymour M. Farber, M.D., San Francisco
Lowell J. Paige, El Macero
Cruz Reynoso, Los Angeles, *Vice Chairperson*
Sharon N. Skog, Palo Alto
Thomas E. Stang, Los Angeles
Stephen P. Teale, M.D., Modesto

Representatives of the segments are:

Yori Wada, San Francisco; appointed by the Regents of the University of California

Claudia H. Hampton, Los Angeles; appointed by the Trustees of the California State University

Borgny Baird, Long Beach; appointed by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges

Harry Wugalter, Thousand Oaks; appointed by the Council for Private Postsecondary Educational Institutions

Kenneth L. Peters, Tarzana; appointed by the California State Board of Education

James B. Jamieson, San Luis Obispo; appointed by California's independent colleges and universities

Functions of the Commission

The Commission is charged by the Legislature and Governor to "assure the effective utilization of public postsecondary education resources, thereby eliminating waste and unnecessary duplication, and to promote diversity, innovation, and responsiveness to student and societal needs."

To this end, the Commission conducts independent reviews of matters affecting the 2,600 institutions of postsecondary education in California, including Community Colleges, four-year colleges, universities, and professional and occupational schools.

As an advisory planning and coordinating body, the Commission does not administer or govern any institutions, nor does it approve, authorize, or accredit any of them. Instead, it cooperates with other state agencies and non-governmental groups that perform these functions, while operating as an independent board with its own staff and its own specific duties of evaluation, coordination, and planning,

Operation of the Commission

The Commission holds regular meetings throughout the year at which it debates and takes action on staff studies and takes positions on proposed legislation affecting education beyond the high school in California. By law, the Commission's meetings are open to the public. Requests to address the Commission may be made by writing the Commission in advance or by submitting a request prior to the start of a meeting.

The Commission's day-to-day work is carried out by its staff in Sacramento, under the guidance of its executive director, William H. Pickens, who is appointed by the Commission.

The Commission publishes and distributes without charge some 40 to 50 reports each year on major issues confronting California postsecondary education. Recent reports are listed on the back cover.

Further information about the Commission, its meetings, its staff, and its publications may be obtained from the Commission offices at 1020 Twelfth Street, Third Floor, Sacramento, CA 98514; telephone (916) 445-7933.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FRESHMAN ADMISSION TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

California Postsecondary Education Commission Report 88-11

ONE of a series of reports published by the Commission as part of its planning and coordinating responsibilities. Additional copies may be obtained without charge from the Publications Office, California Postsecondary Education Commission, Third Floor, 1020 Twelfth Street, Sacramento, California 95814-3985.

Recent reports of the Commission include:

88-6 Comments on Educational Equity Plans of the Segments: A Staff Report on the Development of Plans by the State Department of Education, the California State University, and the University of California to Achieve the Educational Equity Goals of Assembly Concurrent Resolution 83 (1984) (February 1988)

88-7 Size, Growth, and Cost of Administration at the California State University: A Report Prepared by Price Waterhouse and MGT Consultants for the California Postsecondary Education Commission (February 1988)

88-8 Overview of the 1988-89 Governor's Budget for Postsecondary Education in California: Testimony by William H. Pickens, Executive Director, California Postsecondary Education Commission (March 1988)

88-9 Faculty Salaries in California's Public Universities, 1988-89: The Commission's 1987 Report to the Legislature and Governor in Response to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 51 (1965) (March 1988)

88-10 Eligibility of California's 1986 High School Graduates for Admission to Its Public Universities: A Report of the 1986 High School Eligibility Study (March 1988)

88-11 Eligibility for Freshman Admission to the University of California: A Statement to the Regents of the University by William H. Pickens, Executive Director, California Postsecondary Education Commission, February 18, 1988 (March 1988)

88-12 Time to Degree in California's Public Universities: Factors Contributing to the Length of Time Undergraduates Take to Earn Their Bachelor's Degree (March 1988)

88-13 Evaluation of the California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP): A Report to the Legislature in Response to Assembly Bill 2398 (Chapter 620, Statutes of 1984) (March 1988)

88-14 Standardized Tests Used for Higher Education Admission and Placement in California During 1987: The Third in a Series of Annual Reports Published in Accordance with Senate Bill 1758 (Chapter 1505, Statutes of 1984) (March 1988)

88-15 Update of Community College Transfer Student Statistics Fall 1987: University of California, The California State University, and California's Independent Colleges and Universities (March 1988)

88-16 Legislative Update, March 1988: A Staff Report to the California Postsecondary Education Commission (March 1988)

88-17 State Policy for Faculty Development in California Public Higher Education: A Report to the Governor and Legislature in Response to Supplemental Language in the 1986 Budget Act (May 1988)

88-18 to 20 Exploring Faculty Development in California Higher Education: Prepared for the California Postsecondary Education Commission by Berman, Weiler Associates:

- **88-18** Volume One: Executive Summary and Conclusions, by Paul Berman and Daniel Weiler, December 1987 (March 1988)
- **88-19** Volume Two: Findings, by Paul Berman, Jo-Ann Intili and Daniel Weiler, December 1987 (March 1988)
- **88-20** Volume Three: Appendix, by Paul Berman, Jo-Ann Intili, and Daniel Weiler, January 1988 (March 1988)

88-21 Staff Development in California's Public Schools: Recommendations of the Policy Development Committee for the California Staff Development Policy Study, March 16, 1988 (March 1988)

88-22 and 23 Staff Development in California: Public and Personal Investments, Program Patterns, and Policy Choices, by Judith Warren Little, William H. Gerritz, David S. Stern, James W. Guthrie, Michael W. Kirst, and David D. Marsh. A Joint Publication of Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development • Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), December 1987:

- **88-22** Executive Summary (March 1988)
- **88-23** Report (March 1988)